

for of an hundred, certeyntly,  
Nor of a thousand ful searly,  
Ne shal they fynde unmetthis oon,  
Whan povertie is comen upon.  
for this fortune that I of telle,  
With men whan hir lust to dwelle,  
Makith hem to lese hir conisaunce,  
And nourishith hem in ignoraunce.  
**B**UT froward fortune and perverse,  
Whan high estatis she doth reverse,  
And maketh hem to tumble down  
Of hir whele, with sodeyn toun,  
And from hir richesse doth hem flee,  
And plongeth hem in povertie,  
As a stepmoder envious,  
And leyeth a plastre dolorous  
Unto her hertis, wounded egre,  
Which is not tempred with vinegre,  
But with povertie and indigence,  
for to shewe, by experience,  
That she is fortune verely  
In whom no man shulde affy,  
Nor in hir yefis have fiance,  
She is so ful of variance.  
Thus can she maken high and lowe,  
Whan they from richesse aren throwe,  
fully to knowen, withouten were,  
freend of effect, and freend of chere;  
And which in love weren trew and stable,  
And whiche also weren variable,  
After fortune, hir goddesse,  
In povertie, outhere in richesse;  
for al she yeveth, out of drede,  
Unhappe bereveth it in dede;  
for Infortune lat not oon  
Of freendis, whan fortune is goon;  
Imene tho freendis that wol flee  
Anoon as entreth povertie.  
And yit they wol not leve hem so,  
But in ech place where they go  
They calle hem Wrecche, scorne and blame,  
And of hir mishappe hem diffame,  
And, namely, siche as in richesse  
Pretendith most of stablenesse,  
Whan that they sawe him set onlofte,  
And weren of him socoured ofte,  
And most yholpe in al hir nede:  
But now they take no maner hede,  
But seyn, in voice of flaterye,  
That now apperith hir folye,  
Overal whereso they fare,  
And singe: Go, farewell feldefare.  
Alle suche freendis I beshrewe,  
for of the trewe ther be to fewe;  
But sothfast freendis, what so bityde,  
In every fortune wolen abyde;  
They han hir hertis in suche noblesse  
That they nil love for no richesse;  
Nor, for that fortune may hem sende,  
They wolen hem socoure and defende;  
And chaunge for softe ne for sore,  
for who is freend, loveth evermore.  
Though men drawe swerd his freend to slo,

He may not hewe hir love atwo.  
**B**UT, in the case that I shal sey,  
for pride and ire lese it he may,  
And for reprove by nycete,  
And discovering of privitee,  
With tonge wounding, as feloun,  
Thurgh venemous detraccioun,  
frend in this case wol gon his way,  
for nothing greve him more ne may;  
And for nought ellis wol he flee,  
If that he love in stabilitee.  
And certeyn, he is wel bigoon  
Among a thousand that fyndith oon,  
for ther may be no richesse,  
Ageyns frendship, of worthinesse;  
for it ne may so high atteigne  
As may the valoure, sooth to seyne,  
Of him that loveth trew and wel;  
frendship is more than is catel,  
for freend in court ay better is  
Than peny in his purs, certis;  
And fortune, mishapping,  
Whan upon men she is falling,  
Thurgh misturning of hir chaunce,  
And casteth hem oute of balaunce,  
She makith, thurgh hir adversitee,  
Men ful cleerly for to see  
Him that is freend in existence  
from him that is by apparence,  
for Infortune makith anoon  
To knowe thy freendis fro thy foon,  
By experience, right as it is;  
The which is more to preysse, ywis,  
Than is miche richesse and tresour;  
for more doth profit and valour  
Povertie, and such adversitee,  
Bifore than doth prosperitee;  
for the toon yeveth conisaunce,  
And the tother ignoraunce.  
**A**ND thus in povertie is in dede  
Trouthe declared fro falsehede;  
for feynthe freendis it wol declare,  
And trewe also, what wey they fare,  
for whan he was in his richesse,  
These freendis, ful of doublenesse,  
Offrid him in many wyse  
Hert and body, and servyse.  
What wolde he than ha yeve to ha bought  
To knowen openly her thought,  
That he now hath so clerly seen?  
The lasse bigyled he sholde have been  
And he hadde than perceyved it,  
But richesse nold not late him wit.  
Wel more avauntage doth him than,  
Sith that it makith him a wys man,  
The greet mischeef that he receyveth,  
Than doth richesse that him deceyveth.  
Richesse riche ne makith nought  
Him that on tresour set his thought;  
for richesse stont in suffisaunce  
And nothing in habundaunce;  
for suffisaunce alonly  
Makith men to live richely.

for he that hath but miche tweyne,  
Ne more value in his demeigne,  
Leverth more at ese, and more is riche,  
Than doth he that is so chiche,  
And in his bern hath, soth to seyn,  
An hundred muwis of whete greyn,  
Though he be chapman or marchant,  
And have of golde many besaunt.  
for in the geting he hath such wo,  
And in the keping drede also,  
And set evermore his bisynesse  
for to encrese, and not to lesse,  
for to augment and multiply.  
Yit never shal make his richesse  
Asseth unto his gredinesse.  
But the poore that recchith nought,  
Save of his lyfode, in his thought,  
Which that he getith with his travaile,  
He dredith nought that it shal faille,  
Though he have lytel worldis good,  
Mete and drinke, and esy food,  
Upon his travel and living,  
And also suffisaunt clothing,  
Or if in syknesse that he falle,  
And lothe mete and drink withalle,  
Though he have nought, his mete to by,  
He shal bithinke him hastely,  
To putte him out of al daunger,  
That he of mete hath no mister;  
Or that he may with litel eke  
Be founden, whyl that he is seke;  
Or that men shul him bere in hast,  
To live, til his syknesse be past,  
To somme maysondewe bisyde;  
He cast nought what shal him bityde.  
He thenkith nought that ever he shal  
Into any syknesse falle.  
**A**ND though it falle, as it may be,  
That al betyme spare shal he  
As mochel as shal to him suffyce,  
Whyl he is gyke in any wyse,  
He doth it, for that he wol be  
Content with his povertie  
Withoute nede of any man.  
So miche in litel have he can,  
He is apayed with his fortune;  
And for he nil be importune  
Unto no wight, ne onerous,  
Nor of hir goodes covetous;  
Therefore he apareth, it may wel been,  
His pore estat for to sustene.  
**R** if him lust not for to spare,  
But suffrith forth, as nought ne ware,  
Atte last it hapneth, as it may,  
Right unto his laste day,  
And taketh the world as it wolde be;  
for ever in herte thenkith he,  
The soner that the deeth him slo,  
To paradys the soner go  
He shal, there for to live in blisse,  
Where that he shal no good misse.  
Chider he hopith God shal him sende

Aftir his wrecchid lyves ende,  
Pictagoras himsilf rehereses,  
In a book that the Golden Verses  
Is clepid, for the nobilitee  
Of the honourable ditee:  
**E**HAN, whan thou gost thy body fro,  
Free in the air thou shalt up go,  
And leven al humanitee,  
And purely live in deitee.  
He is a fool, withouten were,  
That trowith have his cowntre here.  
In erthe is not our cowntre,  
That may these clerkis seyn and see  
In Boece of Consolacioun,  
Where it is maked mencion  
Of our cowntre pleyn at the eye,  
By teching of philosophye,  
Where lewid men might lere wit,  
Whoso that wolde translaten it.  
**I**f he be siche that can wel live  
Aftir his rente may him yive,  
And not desyreth more to have,  
That may fro povertie him save:  
A wys man seide, as we may seen,  
Is no man wrecched, but he it wene,  
Be he king, knight, or ribaud,  
And many a ribaud is mery and baud,  
That swinkith, and berith, bothe day and night,  
Many a burthen of gret might,  
The whiche dothe him lasse offense,  
for he suffrith in pacience.  
They laugh and daunce, trippe and singe,  
And ley not up for her living,  
But in the tavern al dispendith  
The winning that God hem sendith.  
Than goth he, fardels for to bere,  
With as good chere as he dide ere;  
To swinke and traveile he not feynith,  
for for to robben he disdeynith;  
But right anoon, aftir his swinke,  
He goth to tavern for to drinke.  
Alle these ar riche in abundaunce,  
That can thus have suffisaunce  
Wel more than can an usurer,  
As God wel knowith, withoute were.  
for an usurer, so God me see,  
Shal never for richesse riche bee,  
But evermore pore and indigent,  
Scarce, and gredy in his entent.  
**F**OR soth it is, whom it displese,  
Ther may no marchant live at ese,  
His herte in sich a were is set,  
That it quik brenneth more to get,  
Ne never shal enough have geten;  
Though he have gold in gerners yeten,  
for to be nedy he dredith sore.  
Wherefore to geten more and more  
He set his herte and his desire;  
So hote he brennith in the fire  
Of covetise, that makith him wood  
To purchase other mennes good.  
He undirfongith a gret peyne,  
That undirtakith to drinke up Seyne;